

“Images of Cortés in Sixteenth-Century Translations of Francisco López de Gómara’s Historia de la conquista de México (1552)”: Special edition by Roberto A. Valdeón

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Images of Cortés in sixteenth-century translations of Francisco López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista de México* (1552)

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This study provides an overview of five sixteenth-century translations of Francisco López de Gómara's *Historia de la conquista de México* (1552), namely, Agostino di Cravaliz's and Lucio Mauro's into Italian, Thomas Nicholls's into English, and Martin Fumée's and Guillaume Le Breton's into French. The article is organized into two main sections. The first one casts some light upon the socio-historical context in which the translations were written by analysing several paratexts (e.g., acknowledgements and introductions). The second section focuses on the manner in which passages regarding Cortés's origins and death were rendered, discussing translators' techniques, skopos, and target audiences.

Keywords: Francisco López de Gómara, Hernán Cortés, Aztec Empire, conquest, colonization, skopos

1. Introduction

Soon after its publication, the Spanish priest Francisco López de Gómara's (1511-ca. 1559) *Historia general de las Indias* (General history of the Indies) (1552) was shrouded in polemics. As encapsulated by its subtitle – “con todo el descubrimiento y cosas notables que han acaecido desde que se ganaron hasta el año de 1551” (covering the discovery and notable events occurring since [the Indies] were won until the year of 1551) – López de Gómara aspired to furnish a comprehensive story of New World “discoveries” and conquests by the Spaniards.¹ Its second part, *Historia de la conquista de México* (History of the conquest of Mexico), was specifically concerned with Hernán Cortés's military campaigns against the Aztec Empire. A year after its publication, and despite the novelty of its contents, the highest colonial administration within the Spanish Empire (the Council of the Indies) banned it. López de

¹ All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

Gómara apparently met with discontent from a circle of officials, historians, and conquistadores alike. Firstly, he failed to dedicate the history of the conquest of Mexico to Emperor Charles V or to the future emperor, his son Philip II. Instead, the honour was bestowed upon Cortés's son, the Marquis of Valle Don Martín Cortés. Secondly, López de Gómara was accused of making factual mistakes and of elevating Hernán Cortés to the stature of an exemplary Christian hero of military acumen, exhibiting bravery in battle, the gift of speech, and a moral compass. These accolades were perceived as having been inscribed in a biased narrative (Gurría Lacroix 2007, xviii-xxiii; Roa-de-la-Carrera 2005, 3).²

The circumstances in which López de Gómara wrote *Historia general de las Indias* can be seen as offering strong proof of these accusations. López de Gómara and Cortés had met soon before, or during, the failed expedition Emperor Charles V made to Algiers in 1541, in which both participated. From then on and until Cortés's death in 1547, López de Gómara worked as his personal secretary and chaplain (Gurría Lacroix 2007, xvi; Roa-de-la-Carrera 2010, 37). During this six-year period, they acted in tandem, in pursuit of their own ambitions. In 1542, López de Gómara launched his career as a historian by beginning the *Crónica de los corsarios Barbarroja* (Chronicle of the corsairs Barbarroja), on the failed Algiers expedition, and the *Historia general de las Indias*.³ For the writing of the former, López de Gómara counted on his and Cortés's declarations as witnesses. For the latter, never having travelled to the New World, López de Gómara relied heavily on Cortés's published *Cartas de relación* (Narrative letters) and on direct communications with him.⁴ Jorge Gurría Lacroix (2007) conjures up two possible scenarios: Cortés and López de Gómara would have entertained conversations during which, in a question-answer pattern, Cortés narrated events, whilst López de Gómara took

² Hefty criticism was levelled, among others, by chroniclers Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, and by one of the conquistadores of Mexico, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who even turned to writing his own "true story." For further reference, see Roa-de-la-Carrera (2005, 21-75; 2010, 42-43).

³ Roa-de-la-Carrera (2010, 38) states that López de Gómara's intellectual career flourished under Cortés's wing. Other works attributed to López de Gómara are *Anales del emperador Carlos V* (Annals of Emperor Charles V) and *Guerras de mar del emperador Carlos V* (Sea battles of Emperor Charles V) (Alcibíades 2007, 461-462; Roa-de-la-Carrera 2010, 38).

⁴ For a recent and thorough analysis of Cortés's five letters and other documents attributed to him, see Aracil Varón (2016).

notes. On other occasions, Cortés dictated reports and speeches that López de Gómara codified verbatim.⁵

As for Cortés's appointment of López de Gómara, it seems as if he saw in him a most suitable writer to realize the composition of a biography. In fact, alongside his published *Cartas de relación*, Cortés's accounts of *Historia de la conquista de México* had the potential to operate as a means to buttress his social rank and prestige (Roa-de-la-Carrera 2010, 42). For some scholars, López de Gómara's original intention was solely to report on Cortés's campaign in Mexico; in other words, to compose *Historia de la conquista de México*. In other words, whilst the first book of the general history would have been conceived as an introduction to New World territories and their peoples, the second constituted a laudatory portrayal of Cortés's persona (Gurría Lacroix 2007, ix; Iglesia 1942, 158). Even López de Gómara (2007, 455) explains the circular and enclosed structure of this second book in these terms: "por haber yo comenzado la conquista de México en su nacimiento, la fenezco en su muerte" (because I began the conquest of Mexico with his birth, I conclude it with his demise).

Seeking to establish himself as a historian, López de Gómara was equally aware of the interest that his two-volume *Historia general de las Indias* was to arouse on both sides of the Atlantic. He shared sixteenth-century historians' common practice of citing and plagiarizing sources in the elaboration of texts and foresaw the translation of his entire work into several languages for the circulation of data on the New World (Roa-de-la-Carrera 2010, 35, 45).⁶ The following decades proved him right. The uniqueness of his work, in particular of *Historia de la conquista de México*, which contained no less than Cortés's direct accounts, and possibly the fact that *Historia general de las Indias* had been prohibited in Spain, made it cross the borders of the Empire as a desirable text. Thus, *Historia de la conquista de México* appeared in Italian, translated by Agostino di Cravaliz, in 1555, and by Lucio Mauro, in 1559; in English,

⁵ Glen Carman (2006) has analysed how Cortés's spoken reports turned into these written accounts. For a discussion of other sources and testimonies of which López de Gómara availed himself, including writings by Peter Martyr d'Anghiera, Andrés de Tapia, Pedro de Alvarado, and Fray Toribio de Benavente, "Motolinía," see Iglesia (1942, 187), O'Gorman (1971, xlix-lx), Gurría Lacroix (2007, xiii-xv), and Roa-de-la-Carrera (2010).

⁶ López de Gómara even advised readers not to translate his work into Latin as it was a project that he was undertaking. He must have referred to *Vida de Hernán Cortés* (Life of Hernán Cortés), which eventually became known as *Rebus gestis Ferdinandi Cortesii* (Exploits by Ferdinand Cortés).

by Thomas Nicholls, in 1578; and in French, by Martin Fumée, in 1584, and by Guillaume Le Breton, in 1588 (Gerbault 2003; Roa-de-la-Carrera 2010, 45; Valdeón 2014, 175-177).⁷

Several studies have referred to the reasons why the *Historia de la conquista de México* was translated into these specific target languages. The Italian version would have been a desirable artefact for collectors who wished to acquire knowledge on the New World, as a work that circulated in intellectual and cultural circles (Markey 2016). The English one is perceived as an attempt to portray Cortés as a successful conqueror, only to be surpassed by the English in future explorations of newfound lands (De Schepper 2012). Regarding the two French translations, Fumée's is likewise believed to highlight historical and geographical data in order to incite French forays into America's northern lands (Hart 2001), whereas Le Breton's seems to stress the narrative nature of the original source by emphasizing the exotic and the Spaniards' military achievements (Gerbault 2003). Drawing on previous studies, this article has a double intention and is, correspondingly, divided into two main sections. The first seeks to provide an overview of all the translations by discussing passages of a paratextual nature (titles, acknowledgements, and introductions) which unveil the socio-historical context in which they were produced and display how Cortés is presented in general terms. The second casts light upon the manner in which López de Gómara portrays Cortés as a pious, brave, and noble conqueror, yet at the same time fallible, and how these features are treated in the translations. Thus, the study analyses several passages found in the opening and closing chapters of *Historia de la conquista de México*, which concern Cortés's origins and death. The examination of these excerpts will allow an understanding of the translators' techniques and how they rendered López de Gómara's images of Cortés according to their respective skopos and target audiences.

2. Chronological contextualisation of the translations of *Historia de la conquista de México*

Little is known about the first Italian translator of *Historia de la conquista de México*, Agostino di Cravaliz, apart from his penchant for the dissemination of accounts of conquests of New World great empires. In 1555, he published his translation of Pedro Cieza de León's *Primera*

⁷ *Historia de la conquista de México* was also translated into Nahuatl, the main language of the valley of Mexico, by the seventeenth-century noble and indigenous chronicler Juan Bautista de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin. For further reference, see Roa-de-la-Carrera (2010) and Roa-de-la-Carrera, Schroeder, and Tavárez (2011).

crónica del Perú (First chronicle of Peru), on the conquest of the Inca Empire, and of López de Gómara's second book on that of the Aztecs⁸ – his translation of the first book appeared a year later.⁹ The different titles that were given to his translation of *Historia de la conquista de México* bear evidence of the importance that Cravaliz placed on extolling Cortés as a virtuous figure. The first edition, published in Rome, is entitled *Historia di Mexico, et quando si discoperse la Nuoua Hispagna, conquistata per l'illustriss. et ualoroso principe Don Ferdinando Cortes marchese del Valle* (History of Mexico, when the New Spain was discovered and conquered by the most illustrious and brave prince Ferdinand Cortes, Marquis of Valle) (cited in Albertín Astilleros 2013, 3). In its last edition (1576), which this study quotes, the “history of Mexico” is even replaced with “the history of Cortés.” More specifically, it reads: *Historia di Don Ferdinando Cortes, Marchese della Valle, Capitano Valorosissimo. Con le sue maravigliose prodezze, nel tempo che discoprì & acquistò la nuoua Spagna* (History of Don Ferdinand Cortes, Marquis of Valle, bravest Captain. With his marvellous prowess during the time he discovered and conquered the New Spain).

Cravaliz's translation was dedicated to two influential patrons of the arts: Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574) and Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi (1500-1564).¹⁰ In her analysis of Cravaliz's dedication to Cosimo (1560), Lia Markey discusses the manner in which Cravaliz seeks to call his attention by enthusiastically underlining the significance of American novelties (2016, 47-49). For example, at the beginning of the first book, on general history, Cravaliz brands the “discovery of the Indies” as the greatest achievement to have ever occurred since the creation of the world, and stresses the newness of botanical and zoological specimens, from which the Old World could benefit. Another contention put forward by Markey is that Cravaliz's version became a new artefact in the Italian court culture. Held in Cosimo's library, the book would have been perceived as another piece of his magnificent collection of New World exotica, comprising feather-work, mosaic masks, and jewels, which coexisted with other collections of paintings, small bronzes, and jewels from different periods and cultures.

Cravaliz's dedication to da Carpi resonates with a similar admiration towards novelties from the other side of the Atlantic. A former diplomat who had met passionate collectors of

⁸ Albertín Astilleros (2013) carries out a comparative analysis of Cravaliz's translation strategies in both texts.

⁹ Cravaliz's translation of López de Gómara's entire work proved a success since it ran up to fifteen editions (Gruzinski 2010, 178).

¹⁰ The dedication to Cosimo can be found in the 1560 Venetian edition of Francesco Lorenzini da Turino; the dedication to da Carpi appears in those printed by Giovanni Bonadio in 1563 and by Camillo Franceschini in 1576.

New World objects throughout his lifetime, such as Emperor Charles V, da Carpi was also a humanist, with a desire for knowledge. In the opening lines of his translation Cravaliz explains to him, and to other potential readers, the three main personal reasons that had inspired him to render this work: “per satisfare à gli amici, per diporto mio, & per fuggire l’ociosità” (in order to satisfy my friends, for my own sport, and to escape idleness) (Cravaliz 1576, 3-4). Cravaliz insists on the uniqueness of the material exposed, branding this “history” as “rarissima” (extremely rare), in that it deals with: “gente a noi incognita; di milicia, costumi, & religione, a noi diuersi; con altre bellissime cose, di quella regione, & mondo nuouo, che gli antichi desiderorno tanto di sapere” (people unknown to us, with their militia, traditions, and religions distinct from ours; with other beautiful things, from that region [Mexico] and from the New World, about which our predecessors would have wished so much to know) (ibid.).

In his dedication to da Carpi, Cravaliz resumes the highly eulogizing portrayal of Cortés that is advanced in the title of the translation, depicting him with a string of superlatives, including “eccellentis.e. ualorosiss. Capitano Ferdinãdo Cortes” (the most excellent and bravest Captain Ferdinand Cortes), “c[on] qu[an]to generosissimo animo” (of great generous disposition), “perfettissimo capitano” (most perfect Captain), and “gloriosissimo capitano [...] procreato sotto felicissima stella” (most glorious Captain [...] conceived under a very lucky star) (Cravaliz 1576, 2-4). It is also worth noting the manner in which Cravaliz summarizes some events that occurred during the conquest, and how he alludes to the hardships Cortés encountered. Thus, he formulates rhetorical questions that make Cortés embody the bravery, intelligence, and good nature of the perfect conqueror. For example, in order to mention how Cortés exposed himself and his army to strenuous and dangerous circumstances, Cravaliz enquires: “perche ritrouandosi in regione tanto lontanissima, & con si poca speranza di soccorso, & rimedio [...] leuò la speranza alii soldati” (why did he bring hope to his soldiers, finding themselves in such a remote place, and with so little hope of help and support?) (1576, 3). Similarly, in his defence of Cortés’s military prowess and ingenious persuasive skills, Cravaliz wonders: “con quanto inuittissimo animo, et sapientissima persuasione, & cauta dissimulatione [...], con si poca gente di farlo [Moctezuma] prigione, nella sua superbissima città” (how with victorious will, extremely wise persuasion, and cautious dissimulation, [...] with so few men [he managed] to make [Moctezuma] hostage in his most superb city) (ibid.).

The perpetuation of Cortés’s alleged extraordinary virtues is ensured in the second translation into Italian, that of Lucio Mauro, which was published in approximately 1559. Further research is needed to pinpoint the reasons behind the appearance of this new version, which ran parallel to Cravaliz’s. What is certain is that, from its inception, Mauro’s rendering

carries the impression of following the original more faithfully. Thus, in contrast with Cravaliz, Mauro translates López de Gómara's introduction to the book – his dedication to Cortés's son, Don Martín (Mauro 1566, 1-4) – which in Cravaliz's text is replaced by his dedication to da Carpi.¹¹ In the 1566 edition, which this study quotes, both Mauro and the printer, Giordano Ziletti, emphasized the novelty of the translation by incorporating the phrase “Nuouamente tradotta di lingua spagnola” (newly translated from the Spanish language) in the first title page. Ziletti opens the book with a dedication to the “R.^{do} Padre; Maestro Michele Avreliano da Brescia” (reverend Father, Master Michele Aureliano da Brescia), an eight-page text extolling the Spaniards' feats upon the discovery and conquest of far-away lands. In particular, it celebrates Cortés's role in Mexico and commends his expansion of Christianity at a time in which, Ziletti recalls, conversion campaigns in Malta had proven difficult because of the Turks (Mauro 1566, iiij).

The next translation in line is Thomas Nicholls's *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India, now called new Spaine. Atchieued by the woorthie Prince Hernando Cortes, Marques of the valley of Huaxacac, most delectable to reade* (London, 1578). It seems to have enjoyed a certain popularity, as evidenced by a second edition in 1596, which this study quotes, and the inspiration its contents furnished for the writing of several plays, including John Day's lost text *The Conquest of the West Indies* (1601), Joseph Simons's *Montezuma sive Mexici Imperii Occasus*, and John Dryden's *The Indian Emperour* (1665) (Knutson and McInnis 2001, 54-55). As for Nicholls, he is thought to have left England in his early twenties and settled down in the Canary Islands, where he lived in an entourage of English commercial agents and merchants until the early 1560s. Soon after Queen Elizabeth occupied the throne, these merchants became political enemies. Nicholls, in particular, saw his properties confiscated and was imprisoned in 1559 (Castillo 1992, 67). Details of his later life as a merchant can be inferred from his preface to *The Pleasant Historie of the Conquest of the West India*, a dedication to the “right Honourable Sir Francis Walsingham Knight, principall Secretary to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, and one of her highnesse most honourable priuie Counsell.” Walsingham has gone down in history as a powerful and well-travelled diplomat who, in his capacity as principal secretary to Queen Elizabeth, set up a foreign intelligence network. In fact, Nicholls's first foray into the world of translation might have been part of a programme

¹¹ See, for example, the 1563 and 1576 editions of Cravaliz's translation.

that informed the Privy Council of the Spanish monarchy's reappraisals of military and financial strength (Baldwin 2004; Maczelka 2017, 47).¹²

In said prefatory dedication, Nicholls also recounts that he had first considered the translation of López de Gómara's text whilst residing in the Isle of Palma, "in affaires of merchandize for the worshipfull Thomas Lock [...] and his cōpany" (Nicholls 1596, 2), and after having entertained a conversation with an "auncient gentlemen which had serued in the Conquest of the Weast India, now called new Spaine, under the princely Captaine Hernando Cortes" (ibid.). In his words to Walsingham, Nicholls spells out the purpose of his "delectable" translation and stresses the authenticity of data on new discoveries of wonderful and rich lands, as successfully occupied by the Spaniards. He prompts readers to observe how "great paines, travaile, peril and daunger of life" were surmounted thanks to the "wisdom, curtesie, valour and pollicie of worthie Captaines," and to learn "how to use and correct the stubborn and mutinous persons, and what order to exalt the good, stout and vertuous Souldiours, and chiefly howe to preserue and keepe that beautifull Dame Ladie Victorie, when she is obtained" (3). This excerpt, notwithstanding its celebration of the Spanish enemy, Cortés and his army, is indicative of the inspirational potential that his translation provided not only to support English military action but also merchants' incursions. Illustrative of this is Nicholls's statement that the text reports on how the Spaniards were exploiting gold mines, followed by his quoting of the merchant Michael Locke, who knew for a fact that the precious metal also lay "incorporate in the bowels of the Northwest parties, environed with admirable Towers, pillars and pinnacles, of rockets, stone [...] possessed of a people both straunge, and rare in shape, attire and living" (ibid.). This final line on the indigenous peoples leads Nicholls to make an arresting statement; they had been forsaken by everyone except for "our most gracious Queene and her subiects, whom undoubtedly God hath appointed, not onely to be supreame Princesse ouer them, but also to be a meane that the name of Christ may bee knowne vnto this heathenish and sauage generation" (ibid.). As a translator at the service of Walsingham, Nicholls praises the Queen's

¹² Other translations by Nicholls include *The strange and delectable History of the discoverie and Conquest of the provinces of Peru*, from the original *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Perú* (1555) by Agustín de Zárate; *The strange and marueilous Newes lately come from the great kingdome of Chyna*, from a Spanish letter to Philip II; and a partial version of *Coloquios y diálogos* (Colloquies and dialogues) (1547) by Pedro de Mejía. For a brief study of these translations and of Nicholls's prologues, see Maczelka (2017). Nicholls also authored a full account of the Canaries' geography, government, history, and culture in *A Pleasant description of the fortunate ilandes, called the ilands of Canaria, with their straunge fruits and commodities* (1583) (Castillo 1992, 70).

providential duties and, likely in an indirect allusion to the expansion of the Spanish Empire, calls for the British occupation of north-western parts of America in order to evangelize the indigenous peoples.

For such an ambitious enterprise, only extraordinary men were fit for purpose. Thus, Nicholls ends his preface by presenting Cortés as an epitome of success; a gentleman who brought honour, fame, and riches to his king and to himself: “our Captaine: Hernando Cortes, of whose valiant acts this histoire treateth, hath deserued immortal fame [...], is nowe liuing a Gentleman, whose zeale of trauell and valiant beginning doth prognosticate great, maruellous, and happie successe” (4). In his eulogy of Cortés’s virtues and rewards, Nicholls does not forget the hardships undergone – “for perfection of honor and profit is not gotten in one day, nor in one or two voyages” (4) – and he encourages readers to emulate the Spaniards. In fact, Nicholls’s concluding lines transform his dedication into a political manifesto, urging “Gentlemen, Mariners, and other Artificiers” (5) to bring “honour and profit” upon themselves and to their Queen. In this sense, Susanna B. De Schepper argues that Nicholls’s translation of the second part only of López de Gómara’s entire work thrusts Cortés into the limelight as a successful conqueror, who could be surpassed by the English in future explorations (De Schepper 2012, 81; Hart 2001, 108).

Soon after Nicholls’s translation, two other versions of López de Gómara’s work followed in France and, like the English text, they are embedded in their socio-cultural and political milieu. The first translation was done by Martin Fumée (1540-1601), Lord of Marly le Chastel and of Genillé. He performed duties for the Duke François de Montmorency, to whom he dedicates what seems to have been an attempt to supply exotic readings that would take both Fumée and Montmorency out of the harness of daily life in ongoing French civil wars. Fumée’s translation of the second book, on Cortés’s conquest of Mexico, did not circulate as a separate book, as in the cases of Cravaliz, Mauro and Nicholls. At a time when information on the New World was rare and French readers of history bestowed more importance upon classical antiquity, Fumée chose to translate López de Gómara’s first book, *Histoire generale des Indes Occidentales, et terres neuues, qui iusques à present ont esté descouuertes* (General history of the Western Indies and new lands, which have been discovered up to the present), which appeared in 1568, and into which Cortés’s conquest of Mexico was incorporated in 1584 (Gerbault 2003, introduction). The immediate reach of Fumée’s translation is visible in sixteenth-century French thinkers like Michel de Montaigne, who reflected on its contents for the writing of famous essays such as “Des cannibales” and “Des coches” (Roa-de-la-Carrera 2005, 3). American scholar Jonathan Hart (2001, 106-107) similarly argues that the value of

this translation rests in the lessons the French could learn in the hopes of building an overseas Empire, for example, by occupying the north-western lands of what eventually became Canada.

Fumée's two translations had differing outcomes. His rendering of the first part, covering general information on New World discoveries and conquests, can be labelled as a thorough and faithful translation. However, his translation of the second part departs from the source text, which is suspected to be Cravaliz's Italian version (Gerbault 2003). Overall, Fumée shows a tendency towards concision, sobriety, and avoidance of exotic New World portraits. He deletes full chapters, modifies the original structure and prioritizes the translation of descriptive passages, for example, of geographical content. A possible reason behind his approach is that he considered himself more than a mere translator of the source text. Remarkably, Fumée prefaces the edition quoted here by replacing the space generally devoted to the acknowledgements with a "prologue de l'auteur" (author's prologue). In this, he highlights the New World marvels that French readers are about to discover in the book, precluding references to the Spaniards' salient involvement and conjuring up a message of Christian universal history: "Le monde es si grand, si beau, & sa diuersité de choses differêtes les unes aux autres [...] rauist en admiration [...]. Dieu a créé le monde pour l'homme, & l'a mis en sa puissance, & sous ses pieds" (the world is so big, so beautiful, and its diversity of things between ones and others [...] fills one with awe and admiration [...]. God has created the world for mankind and has placed it under his power, under his feet) (1587, prologue).

Possibly spurred by the name Fumée was making for himself in intellectual and cultural circles as the translator of such a thought-provoking document, or perhaps by the flaws found in his version of the conquest of Mexico, a new translator enters the scene in 1588: Guillaume Le Breton, Lord of La Fon, Nivernais. Le Breton was a poet and playwright who collaborated with other intellectuals of his time, like Pierre de Larivey and François d'Amboise, in the translation of comedies. Alongside Fumée, Le Breton envisaged his new translation as a refreshing addition to their usual readings of classical literature. Hence he argues that his *Voyages et Conquestes du Capitaine Ferdinand Courtois dés Indes Occidentales* (Journeys and conquests of Captain Ferdinand Courtois of the Western Indies) (1588) would compare no less than "avec les serieux escripts d'Herodote, Thucydide, Xenophon, Plutarque, Tite Live, ou Guichardin" (with the serious writings of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, Titus Livy, or Guichardin) (1588, iiij).

In theory, readers could have expected to find in Le Breton's a relatively faithful translation because, to begin with, there is no doubt that he worked directly from the original source in the Spanish language. The truth is that, although his translation is more complete and

closer to López de Gómara's text than his predecessor's, it also indulges in certain idiosyncrasies. Le Breton brings his own literary flair by amplifying the description of passages through synonyms and varied locutions, and he intensifies the exoticism of the accounts by inserting non-translated phrases. More pertinent to this study, however, is the fact that Le Breton modifies the original structure of the source text in order to continue the exaltation of Cortés's figure and glorify the Spaniards' presence in the New World. In this sense, Matthieu Gerbault (2003, introduction) sustains the argument that Le Breton's translation opposes a line of contemporary French intellectuals like Montaigne and the Protestant priest Urbain Chauveton. By way of example, far from condemning the cruelty of the conquistadors, Le Breton praises their prowess, in particular Cortés's, who in his eyes liberated the indigenous peoples – described by Le Breton as cruel barbarians – from their own ignorance.

3. Comparative analysis of images of Cortés in translation

Having provided an overall contextualisation of the Italian, English, and French renderings of López de Gómara's book on the conquest of Mexico, this section offers a brief comparative analysis of selected passages. More specifically, excerpts from two biographical chapters are discussed: the opening one, on Cortés's origins, and the closing one (chapter CCLI), on his death. This juxtaposition of versions is essential in order to ascertain whether Cortés remained the epitome of the outstanding Christian conquistador across the renderings, as well as to showcase the different translation strategies by which the translators abide.

Beginning with Cravaliz's Italian translation of Cortés's birth, his meticulous faithfulness to the original source is not an overstatement. Cravaliz hardly leaves out a translation unit, rendering word for word and sense for sense, and only at times adds extra information for the readers' sake. Some examples of decisions taken are discussed in what follows. In the original text, López de Gómara recounts that, in his childhood, Cortés was affected by several illnesses that brought him to the point of death, and that his health finally improved thanks to his commendation to St. Peter: "en cuyo nombre se dijeron ciertas misas y oraciones [...]. De allí tuvo siempre Cortés su especial abogado y devoto al glorioso apóstol de Jesucristo, San Pedro, y regocijaba cada un año su día en la iglesia y en su casa, donde quiera que se hallase" (in whose name several mass services and orations were held [...]. From then on Cortés always considered Jesus Christ's apostle, glorious St. Peter, his special lawyer, to whom he was devoted. He used to celebrate every year his day in church and at home, no matter

where he found himself) (López de Gómara 2007, 7-8). The paragraph is rigorously translated by Cravaliz as: “in nome del quale, si dissero certe messe & orationi [...], di questo successo hebbe sempre Fernando Cortes per suo spetiale aduocato, & deuoto, il glorioso Apostolo di Giesu Christo San Pietro, & festeggiau la sua festa ogni anno nella Chiesa & nella casa sua, in qual si uoglia luoco che si trouasse” (Cravaliz 1576, 2v). Interestingly, Cravaliz aspires to make his translation sound more specific and fluent since he inserts words like “successo,” as in “di questo successo” (because of this event), for the Spanish phrase “de allí” (because of this). Another example: when naming Cortés’s birthplace, Cravaliz translates that he was born “en Medellín” (López de Gómara 2007, 7) as “in una terra chiamata Medellin” (in a place called Medellin) (Cravaliz 1576, 1r), so as to offset the foreignizing effect produced by the retention of the Spanish name.

As for his sense-for-sense approach, a prime example occurs where he conveys a brief and humorous passage that tells of Cortés’s idle and womanising nature in his youth. Having spent some time in the company of a woman, he left her house by walking across a wall from which he fell. Upon hearing the noise caused by the accident, a jealous neighbour thought that he had been seducing his own wife and tried to murder him. After this event, Cortés passed a full year just recovering from the fall and with no prospects but to enjoy himself, which López de Gómara describes by resorting to the Spanish saying: “andúvose a la flor del berro” – literally meaning that he took to picking up flowers of watercress; figuratively, that he indulged in a good life of pleasure and idleness (López de Gómara 2007, 8). In the Italian version Cravaliz translates the story in full and keeps the same tone of the original by introducing an equivalent: “andò aspasso alla uita di Michelaccio” (he led the same life as Michelaccio) (Cravaliz 1576, 3v); that is, leading a life of leisure.

Despite Cravaliz’s attempts to furnish a faithful, enjoyable, and fluent translation to his readers, Mauro’s competing translation makes its arrival in 1559. Like Cravaliz’s, Mauro’s text follows the original closely, in the sense that he does not delete information and renders every sentence, yet, idiosyncrasies are evident. Thus, Mauro (1566, 3) translates that “Fernando Cortese” (Ferdinand Courtois) was born “in Medellino.” Like Le Breton in his French title, he opts to domesticate the original by translating the “Cortés” surname as “Courtois,” which is a happy coincidence alluding to his gentlemanlike nature, and by transforming Cortés’s birth location of “Medellín” into the Italian sounding town of “Medellino.” Interestingly, his tendency to translate word for word and domesticate the source text also results in conveying a foreignizing effect. Thus, he translates the Spanish saying, “andúvose a la flor del berro,” literally as “andò alla fior di Berro” (5). As for the episode of Cortés’s encounter with a woman,

his fall off the wall, and his subsequent “sabbatical” year, Mauro injects his own humour into the scene with personal interpretations. For instance, unlike the original, in Mauro’s version Cortés is assaulted by “un maritato furibondo” (a furious husband) (4).

In contrast to Cravaliz and Mauro’s translation of this first chapter, the two French versions clearly depart from the original. Fumée modifies the order in which its contents appear, whereas Le Breton deletes the chapter and initiates López de Gómara’s book on the conquest with his own “Eloge de Ferdinand Courtois” (Eulogy of Ferdinand Courteous), which constitutes a personal digression on the conquistador that pays no heed to the original chapter with which López de Gómara begins his second book. Overall, Le Breton cherry-picks a series of anecdotes and events contained in the main body of the text in order to emphasize, for example, Cortés’s exploits: his triumphal entrance in the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan; his persuasive and diplomatic skills, which helped him increase an army of 400 Spanish soldiers to one of 200,000, mostly composed of indigenous peoples; and his key role in bringing Christianity to New Spain and ending human sacrifices.

As for Fumée, instead of opening the history of the conquest with Cortés’s birth, he moves this chapter to the end of the book. Thus, Chapter 100 deals with Cortés’s death and Chapter 101 with “De la naissance et vie de Fernando Cortés” (On the birth and life of Fernando Cortés). One reason for his rearrangement could rest on the possibility that, in contrast to the original, Fumée did not consider the history of the conquest of Mexico as a separate text of biographical interest but as being intrinsically linked to its first part, on the general history of the Indies. As mentioned, López de Gómara establishes a clear transition. In a biography-like format, he opens his history of the conquest of Mexico with Cortés’s birth, followed by the events of the conquest he led, bringing the history to its conclusion with Cortés’s demise. Fumée, by contrast, appears to draw attention to López de Gómara’s description of the New World. In his version, the second book starts with “Comme les Espagnols ont trouué toutes les Indes” (How the Spaniards found all the Indies) (Fumée 1587, 46), and is concerned with the lands and peoples of the Caribbean islands. It is not until the fourteenth chapter that readers learn about the Spaniards’ arrival in New Spain (64). Cortés comes across as another conqueror and the focus is shifted to the wonders that abound in these new territories.

Although postponing the appearance of information on Cortés’s origins deflates the importance bestowed by the original upon the conquistador, this does not necessarily mean that Fumée tones down Cortés’s figure altogether. In fact, at the beginning of Chapter 101, Fumée furnishes a complimentary portrait. The entire passage is redolent of his interferences upon the source text and shows that he aims to produce an entertaining reading. For example, deviating

from the original, Fumée inserts these introductory lines before moving on to provide data on Cortés's date and place of birth: "Ce ne seroit point chose raisonnable, si en escriuant cette histoire ie mettois en oubli la naissance d'un si excellent Capitaine, duquel i ai esté contraint, sans flaterie, descrire vne partie de ses gestes pour la continuation de cet œuvre" (it would be unreasonable if, in writing this history, I forgot the birth of such an excellent Captain and a part of his actions, which I feel urged to describe, without falling into flattery, for the continuation of this work) (Fumée 1587, 194v). In the text that he ends up writing, he rephrases the source as he wishes and disposes of data, as illustrated in his version of Cortés's devotion for St. Peter: "il fut en fin guarí, en memoire dequoi tousiours depuis il solenniza magnifiquement, selon sa puissance, la feste de ce saint" (he was finally healed, and in memory of this he always celebrated, magnificently, according to his status, the feast of this saint) (ibid.).

Despite his penchant for a free translation, Fumée also follows the original with which he was working. For instance, when discussing Cortés's womanising and idleness in his early youth, he translates the Spanish saying used by López de Gómara "andúvose a la flor del berro" (2007, 8) as "s'estant amusé [...] avec Michelaccio" (he amused himself with Michelaccio) (Fumée 1587, 194r). A potential explanation for this word-for-word correspondence with Cravaliz's translation of the phrase – "andò aspasso alla uita di Michelaccio" (1576, 3v) – could be that the Italian saying was known amid the cultivated circle with which Fumée surrounded himself. Another possibility, suggested by Gerbault, is that Fumée followed the Italian translation rather than the original. This point, however, is beyond the scope of this study. Perhaps Fumée, unfamiliar with López de Gómara's phrase, consulted Cravaliz's text and decided to copy his equivalent.

As for Nicholls's English translation, contrary to Fumée and Le Breton's, and like Cravaliz and Mauro's, it maintains the same order of chapters. In comparison to the other renderings, in the first chapter, on "The birth and linage of Hernando Cortez" (Nicholls 1596, 1), Nicholls generally adopts a median stance. He does not appropriate the text as much as Fumée and stands by the original, like Cravaliz and Mauro, catering to his audience for a good understanding of the information. For example, his first line clarifies that Cortés was born "in a towne called Medellin," which he situates for his readers in the south, "in the province of Andulozia" (ibid.), and interprets the phrase "andúvose a la flor del berro," in his own terms, as "wandering here and there" (3). However, like Fumée, Nicholls also deletes certain elements, for instance, the passage on Cortés's devotion to St. Peter.

Regarding the translation of chapter CCLI on Cortés's death, strategically located by López de Gómara at the end of his book, translators tend to adopt the same attitude and

translation decisions that have already been highlighted. Cravaliz and Mauro remain the most faithful of all, translating the source text in its entirety, as demonstrated by the following example. In the original, the author makes his presence clear by stating that he had witnessed Cortés and other Spaniards' bravery and determination during the Algiers expedition: “yo, que me hallé allí, me maravillé” (I, who found myself there, was marvelled) (López de Gómara 2007, 453). Cravaliz translates: “io che mi trouai presente in quella impresa, mi marauigliai” (I, who found myself present in that enterprise, I was marvelled) (1576, 342v), and Mauro similarly writes: “io che mi ui trouai, ne presi marauiglia” (I, who found myself there, was taken by surprise) (1566, 401). This phrase disappears in Nicholls's and Le Breton's translations, which continue to demonstrate more agency on their part. For example, in a passage in which López de Gómara explains that Cortés and the Viceroy of Mexico, Antonio de Mendoza, fell out with each other due to conflicting opinions on embarking on an expedition to the legendary city of Cibola, thought to be a bastion of gold, Nicholls translates the phrase “nunca tornaron en gracia” (they never saw eye to eye again) (López de Gómara 2007, 452) as: “they grew into such hatred that perfect friendship could never after take place between them” (1596, 402). As for Le Breton, he diverts from the original except for the final paragraphs, in which he paraphrases his source (1588, 414-416). In other words, he creates once again his own chapter by using the original as a point of reference on which to digress, and to which he returns only to bring his praise of Cortés to conclusion.

But if there is one translation of López de Gómara's chapter on Cortés's death that stands out, it is Fumée's. First, contrary to his chapter on Cortés's birth, he follows the original more closely. For example, like Cravaliz, he renders the sentence “me hallé allí, me maravillé” (López de Gómara 2007, 453) as “moy-mesme estant present a cette guerre, ie m'estonnay grandement” (being present in this war, I was greatly surprised) (Fumée 1587, 193). Noticeably, Fumée clarifies that “cette guerre” to which he is referring is the Algiers expedition. He likewise inserts extra information when he deems it necessary to provide a better picture for his readers. Thus, he interprets the reason behind Cortés's death – the original explains: “iba malo de cámaras e indigestión” (he suffered from diarrhoea and indigestion) (López de Gómara 2007, 453) – as: “Cortes pour lors estait tourmenté d'un flux de ventre, lequel le tournant en disenterie” (Cortés was tormented by stomach flux, which turned into dysentery) (Fumée 1587, 193). Nonetheless, the highlight of Fumée's translation rests on his addition of a rather long passage. Where the original states that during the Algiers expedition Cortés lost precious jewels, among them five New World emeralds, Fumée incorporates a thorough description of these by copying and faithfully translating a paragraph originally

contained in chapter LXIV of López de Gómara's first book on the general history of the Indies. Here is an excerpt:

L'une estoit taille c[om]me vne rose : la sec[on]de estoit en façon d'une petite couronne [et] la tierce representoit vn poisson, ayant pour les yeux deux grans d'or. [...] La quarte estoit taillee en forme de clochette, laquelle auoit [...] vne grosse perle fine [...]. La cinquiesme estoit comme vne petite tasse, ou encensoir, [...]. Des marchans Geneuois pour cette seule pierre, laquelle estoit la meilleure, auoient voulu luy donner quarante mille ducats, esperans la reuendre a Sultan Soliman Empereur des Turcs.

One was sculpted in the form of a rose, the second as a small crown, and the third as a fish, with two big grains of gold for eyes. [...] The fourth was sculptured in the form of a small bell and had [...] a big and fine pearl [...]. The fifth one was like a small cup or censer [...]. Only for this jewel, which was the best, Genovese merchants had wanted to give him 40,000 ducats, hoping to sell it to the Sultan Suleiman, Emperor of the Turks). (Fumée 1587, 193)

The entire passage, not quoted here, abounds in revealing details, not only because of the portrayal of the five emeralds, but because it tells of their fame among merchants, for whom exotic New World jewels constituted a highly valuable acquisition. What is of particular interest is that Fumée takes agency as a historian and an author, rather than as a translator. He decides to inform his readers about those marvellous jewels, which spoke of Cortés's wealth and his importance as a political figure, as well as of the richness to be found in New World lands from which the said jewels hailed.

4. Concluding remarks

Fumée's final example lays bare that Conquistador Cortés and the New World wonders are the two pillars upon which the original source and his translation are built. In addition, as the first section of this study has sought to demonstrate, prefaces and dedications written by all the translators also feature these two topics as key reference points. Cravaliz dwells on the uniqueness of the work he has translated in that it supplies the description of a distinct geographical area inhabited by unknown human beings with differing traditions, who could only have been "conquered" by an equally extraordinary man. Mauro is the only translator to

keep López de Gómara's laudatory preface, a stance that is buttressed by the printer of his translation, Ziletti. The printer incorporates his own praise of the conquistador and a brief depiction of the peoples and lands conquered in a dedication to a religious authority, interested in the expansion of the Christian faith. As for Nicholls, in his dedication to Walsingham, he similarly presents Cortés as an example to emulate; a brave Christian conquistador who seeks honour and profit in wondrous territories for himself and his emperor. Finally, Fumée and Le Breton distance themselves from their contemporaries' translations in that their faithfulness to the original is more questionable. Fumée changes the order of López de Gómara's structure and relegates information on Cortés to the end of the book, whereas Le Breton deletes both the first and the final chapter on Cortés's birth and death. However, both translators compensate for their manipulations. Fumée recuperates information on Cortés's birth and death later on in his translation, faithfully depicting him as a noble and brave conquistador. As for Le Breton, he elevates López de Gómara's work to the same level as classical histories and presents Cortés as a "Courtois" all-time great historical leader in new lands.

These translations convey the translators' interpretation of Cortés and the New World, a message that was imbued with their own socio-political and cultural milieu. Cravaliz's translation becomes an exotic artefact at the Italian court. Nicholls's version, at the behest of Queen Elizabeth's secretary, Sir Walsingham, puts the richness of the New World in the spotlight, providing English gentlemen with a reading that encourages them to outperform the Spaniards and make England a wealthier nation. In this sense, Nicholls recommends military action so that new lands are conquered and evangelized by the English, and new routes opened for English merchants. Nicholls was not alone in this attempt, for Fumée's translation has likewise been discussed as a text that promotes the colonization of north-western America.

This study recognizes the necessity of an in-depth analysis of these translations as repositories of an imperialist message, and has taken some steps in that direction by comparing some relevant quotes and drawing attention to the manner in which Cortés was portrayed in translation. The second section of the article, in particular, has briefly examined several passages that have demonstrated a line of continuity in praising him; from original to translation, from prefaces and dedications to the body of the text, and from one translation to another, either in the same language or in a different one. If one is to focus on the importance placed upon Cortés in the translations, there is no blatant distortion of the source-text material. Even in those cases in which the translators delete passages and entire chapters, Cortés remains a eulogized figure. Thus, the translators seem to share a similar *skopos*. Thanks to López de Gómara's work, readers of the Italian, English and French translations gained access to the

marvels of the New World – how lands were occupied, and people conquered and evangelised. This gave impetus, at least in Nicholls’s and Fumée’s translations, for replication of English and French campaigns. The Spaniards, and Cortés in particular, were rivals to emulate and surpass, not to be criticized and defamed.

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